

7
SPEECH

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM ·PITT,

ON

THE KING'S MESSAGE,

WHICH WAS DELIVERED IN THE

HOUSE OF' COMMONS,

On Friday, Feb. 1, 1793.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. OWEN, NO. 168, PICCADILLY; AND H. D. SYMONDS,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1793.

Wants half-+1+6.

54...645

7

Mr. PITT's SPEECH

ON

THE KING's MESSAGE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Friday, February 1, 1793.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER,
having moved the Order of the Day, "That
" the House do take into Consideration his Ma-
" jesty's Message."

Mr. SPEAKER read it to the House. It was in
these words :

" GEORGE R.

" His Majesty has given directions for laying
" before the House of Commons copies of several
B " papers

“ papers which have been received from M. Chau-
 “ velin, late Minister Plenipotentiary from the
 “ Most Christian King, by his Majesty’s Secre-
 “ tary of State for Foreign Affairs, and of the an-
 “ swers returned thereto; and likewise copies of
 “ an order made by his Majesty in Council, and
 “ transmitted by his Majesty’s command to the
 “ said M. Chauvelin, in consequence of the ac-
 “ counts of the atrocious act recently perpetrated
 “ at Paris,

“ In the present situation of affairs, his Majesty
 “ thinks it indispensibly necessary to make a far-
 “ ther augmentation of his forces by sea and land,
 “ and relies on the known affection and zeal of
 “ the House of Commons, to enable his Majesty
 “ to take the most effectual measures, in the pre-
 “ sent important conjuncture, for maintaining the
 “ security and rights of his own dominions, for
 “ supporting his allies, and for opposing views of
 “ aggrandizement and ambition on the part of
 “ France, which would be at all times dangerous
 “ to the general interests of Europe, but more
 “ particularly so, when connected with the pro-
 “ pagation

“ pagation of principles which lead to the viola-
 “ tion of the most sacred duties, and are utterly
 “ subversive of the peace and order of all civil
 “ society.”

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER then delivered the following Speech :

SIR,

I SHALL now submit to the House some observations on the many important objects which arise out of the communication of his Majesty's message, and out of the present situation of this country. And in proceeding to the consideration of that message, the attention of the House should, in the first instance, be even strongly directed to that calamitous event *, to that dreadful outrage against every principle of religion, of justice, and of humanity, which has created one general sentiment of indignation and abhorrence in every part of this island, and most undoubtedly has produced the same effect in every civilized country.

* The murder of the King of the French.

At

At the same time I am aware, that I should better consult not only my own feelings, but those of the House, if considerations of duty would permit me, to draw a veil over the whole of this transaction, because it is, in fact, in itself, in all those circumstances which led to it, in all that attended it, and in all which have followed, or which are likely to follow it hereafter, so full of every subject of grief and horror, that it is painful for the mind to dwell upon it. It is a subject which, for the honour of human nature, it would be better, if possible, to dismiss from our memories, to expunge from the page of history, and to conceal it, both now and hereafter, from the observation of the world.

*Excidat ille dies ævo neu postera credant
Secula; nos certe taceamus, & obruta multa
Nocte tegi nostræ patiamur crimina gentis.*

These, Sir, are the words of a great historian * of France in a former period, and were applied to

* De Thou, who applies these words to the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and wishes that day could be blotted out of the history of France.

an occasion which has always been considered as an eternal reproach to the French nation. And the atrocious acts lately perpetrated at Paris are, perhaps, the only instances that furnish any match to that dreadful and complicated scene of proscription and blood. But whatever may be our feelings on this subject, since, alas! it is not possible that the present age should not be contaminated with its guilt; since it is not possible that the knowledge of it should not be conveyed by the breath of tradition to posterity, there is a duty which we are called upon to perform—to enter our solemn protestation, that, on every principle by which men of justice and honour are actuated, it is the foulest and most atrocious deed which the history of the world has yet had occasion to attest.

There is another duty immediately relating to the interest of this and of every other country. Painful as it is to dwell upon this deed, since we cannot conceal what has happened, either from the view of the present age or of posterity, let us not deprive this nation of the benefit that may be derived from reflecting on some of the dreadful effects

effects of those principles which are entertained and propagated with so much care and industry by a neighbouring country. We see in this one instance concentrated together, the effect of principles, which originally rest upon grounds that dissolve whatever has hitherto received the best sanctions of human legislation, which are contrary to every principle of law human and divine. Presumptuously relying on their deceitful and destructive theories, they have rejected every benefit which the world has hitherto received, from the effect either of reason, experience, or even of revelation itself. The consequences of these principles have been illustrated by having been carried into effect in the single person of one, whom every human being commiserates. Their consequences equally tend to shake the security of commerce, to rob the meanest individual in every country of whatever is most dear and valuable to him. They strike directly against the authority of all regular government, and the inviolable personal situation of every lawful sovereign. I do feel it, therefore, not merely a tribute due to humanity, not merely an effusion of those feelings which I possess in
common

common with every man in this country, but I hold it to be a proper subject of reflection to fix our minds on the effect of those principles which have been thus dreadfully attested, before we proceed to consider of measures which it becomes this country to adopt, in order to avert their contagion, and to prevent their growth and progress in Europe,

However, notwithstanding that I feel strongly on this subject, I would, if possible, entreat of the House to consider even this calamitous event rather as a subject of reason and reflection, than of sentiment and feeling. Sentiment is often unavailing, but reason and reflection will lead to that knowledge which is necessary to the salvation of this and of all other countries. I am persuaded the House will not feel this as a circumstance which they are to take upon themselves, but that they will feel it in the manner in which I state it, as a proof of the calamities arising out of the most abominable and detestable principles, as a proof of the absence of all morals, of all justice, of all humanity, and of every principle which does
honour

honour to human nature : and, that it furnishes the strongest demonstration of that dreadful outrage which the crimes and follies of a neighbouring nation have suggested to them. I am persuaded the House will be sensible that these principles, and the effects of them, are narrowly to be watched, that there can be no leading consideration more nearly connected with the prospect of all countries, and most of all, that there can be no consideration more deserving the attention of this House, than to crush and destroy principles which are so dangerous and destructive of every blessing this country enjoys under its free and excellent constitution. We owe our present happiness and prosperity, which has never been equalled in the annals of mankind, to a mixture of monarchical government. We feel and know we are happy under that form of government. We consider it as our first duty to maintain and reverence the British Constitution, which, for wise and just reasons of lasting and internal policy, attaches inviolability to the sacred person of the Sovereign, though, at the same time, by the responsibility it has annexed to government, by the

the check of a wise system of laws, and by a mixture of aristocratic and democratical power in the frame of legislation, it has equally exempted itself from the danger arising from the exercise of absolute power on the one hand, and the still more dangerous contagion of popular licentiousness on the other. The equity of our laws, and the freedom of our political system, have been the envy of every surrounding nation. In this country no man, in consequence of his riches or rank, is so high as to be above the reach of the laws, and no individual is so poor or inconsiderable as not to be within their protection. It is the boast of the law of England, that it affords equal security and protection to the high and the low, to the rich and the poor.

Such is the envied situation of England to be compared, if I may be allowed the expression, to the situation of the temperate zone on the surface of the globe, formed by the bounty of providence for habitation and enjoyment, being equally removed from the polar frosts on the one hand, and the scorching heat of the torrid zone on the other.

C

Where

Where the vicissitude of the seasons, and the variety of the climate, contribute to the vigour and health of its inhabitants, and to the fertility of its soil ; where pestilence and famine are unknown, as also earthquakes, hurricanes, &c. with all their dreadful consequences.

Such is the situation, the fortunate situation of Britain. And what a splendid contrast does it form to the situation of that country which is exposed to all the tremendous consequences of that ungovernable, that intolerable and destroying spirit, which carries ruin and desolation wherever it goes.

Sir, this infection can have no existence in this happy land, unless it is imported, unless it is studiously and industriously brought into this country. These principles are not the natural produce of Great Britain, and it ought to be our first duty, and principal concern, to take the most effectual measures in order to stop their growth and progress in this country, as well as in the other nations of Europe.

Under

Under this impression I wish to bring the House to the consideration of the situation in which we stand with respect to France, and with respect to the general state of the different powers of Europe. This subject was very much discussed on the first day of the present Session, and I had the good fortune to concur with a very large majority of the House in the Address that was presented to his Majesty, for his most gracious speech to both Houses of Parliament. Gentlemen then drew their inferences from those notorious facts which every man's observation presented to him. And those circumstances were supposed to excite every sentiment of jealousy and precaution. They induced the House to arm his Majesty, and the executive government, with those powers which were indispensibly necessary for effectually providing for the safety of the country. Many weeks have now elapsed since the beginning of the Session, when the country appeared to be in a critical situation. Let us consider what are the circumstances now to attract our attention at the moment when the message of his Majesty calls on us for father decision?

The papers which contain the communication between this country and France, consist of two different parts. The one comprehending the communication between this country and France, prior to the period which attracted those sentiments of jealousy I have stated.

This part also contains those comments which have taken place since, and those explanations which have been entered into by his Majesty's permission, with a view, if possible, that our jealousy might be removed in consequence of some step that might be taken,

The other part consists, either of what were notorious facts at the meeting of Parliament, or of those notorious facts, which, though not officially communicated by his Majesty, were very generally known to the public,

The first part of these papers has never before been made public. The date of the first communication is May 12, 1792. And the communication from that period till the 8th of July, contains
the

the system on which his Majesty acted between France and the other European powers. From that period, down to the meeting of Parliament, his Majesty had most scrupulously observed the strictest neutrality with respect to France. He had taken no part whatever in the regulation of her internal government. He had given her no cause of complaint, and therefore the least return he might expect, was, that France would be cautious to avoid every measure that could furnish any just ground of complaint to his Majesty. He might also well expect that France would have felt a proper degree of respect for the rights of himself and his allies. His Majesty might most of all expect, that in the troubled state of that country, they would not have chosen to attempt an interference with the internal government of this country, for the sole purpose of creating dissension among us, and of disturbing a scene of unexampled felicity. But fortunately for this country they did not succeed. The express assurances contained in the papers which have been printed, and are now on the table, the very compact

pact on the part of France does distinctly and precisely apply to every one of these points.

I have no doubt, but gentlemen have applied the interval in perusing these papers with sufficient attention, to make it unnecessary for me to trouble them with more than the leading points. You will perceive, that the very first communication is from M. Chauvelin, May 12, 1792, and contains this passage :

“ Thus the King (of France) saw himself
 “ forced into a war, which was already declared
 “ against him ; but, religiously faithful to the
 “ principles of the Constitution, whatever may
 “ finally be the fate of arms in this war, France re-
 “ jects all ideas of aggrandizement. She will pre-
 “ serve her limits, her liberty, her constitution,
 “ her unalienable right of reforming herself when-
 “ ever she may think proper : she will never con-
 “ sent that, under any relation, foreign powers
 “ should attempt to dictate, or even dare to nou-
 “ rish a hope of dictating laws to her. But this
 “ very pride, so natural and so great, is a sure
 “ pledge

“ pledge to all the powers from whom she shall
 “ have received no provocation, not only of her
 “ constantly pacific dispositions, but also of the
 “ respect which the French well know how to
 “ shew at all times for the laws, the customs, and
 “ all the forms of government of different na-
 “ tions.”

“ The King indeed wishes it to be known,
 “ that he would publicly and severely disavow all
 “ those of his agents at foreign courts in peace with
 “ France, who should dare to depart an instant from
 “ that respect, either by fomenting or favouring
 “ insurrections against the established order, or
 “ by interfering in any manner whatever in the
 “ interior policy of such States, under pretence of
 “ a profelytism, which, exercised in the dominions
 “ of friendly powers, would be a real violation of
 “ the law of nations.”

This paper therefore contains a declaration,
 that whatever might be the fate of arms, France
 rejected all ideas of aggrandizement; she would
 preserve

preserve her rights, she would preserve her limits and her liberty.

This declaration was made in the name of the King.

Gentlemen must remember, after the first revolution, and after the establishment of what they called the model of a government of liberty, the King wished it to be known, that he would publicly disavow all those of his agents at foreign courts, in peace with France, who should dare to depart an instant from that respect, either by fomenting or raising insurrections, or by interfering in any manner whatever in the internal government of such States, under pretence of proselytism, which would be a real violation of the law of nations.

They have therefore passed, by anticipation, that sentence on their own conduct ; and whether we shall pass a different sentence, is one of the objects of this day's consideration.

In

In the passage I have read, two distinct principles are laid down ; the one, that whatever might be the fate of arms, France renounced all ideas of aggrandizement, and declared she would confine herself within her own territories. The other, that to foment and raise insurrections in neutral States, under pretence of proselytism, was a violation of the law of nations. It is evident to all Europe, her conduct has been directly the reverse of those principles, both of which she has trampled under foot, in every instance where it was in her power.

In the answer to that note of M. Chauvelin, his Majesty expresses his concern for the war that had arisen, for the situation of his Most Christian Majesty, and for the happiness of his dominions. He also gives him a positive assurance of his readiness to fulfil, in the most exact manner, the stipulations of the Treaty of Navigation and Commerce, and concludes with these words :

“ Faithful to all his engagements, his Majesty
 “ will pay the strictest attention to the preservation
 “ of the good understanding which so happily

D

“ subsists

“ subsists between him and his Most Christian
 “ Majesty, expecting with confidence, that, ani-
 “ mated with the same sentiments, his Most Chris-
 “ tian Majesty will not fail to contribute to the
 “ same end, by causing, on his part, the rights of
 “ his Majesty and his allies to be respected, and
 “ by rigorously forbidding any step which might
 “ affect the friendship which his Majesty has ever
 “ desired to consolidate and perpetuate, for the
 “ happiness of the two empires.”

We may also see what general assurances France
 thought fit to make to Great Britain, from a note
 from M. Chauvelin to Lord Grenville, dated
 June 8, 1792, where it is said, “ The King of
 “ the French is happy to renew to the King of
 “ Great Britain the formal assurance, that every
 “ thing which can interest the rights of his Bri-
 “ tannic Majesty will continue to be the object of
 “ his most particular and most scrupulous atten-
 “ tion.

“ He hastens, at the same time, to declare to
 “ him, that the rights of all the allies of Great
 “ Britain,

“ Britain, who shall not have provoked France
 “ by hostile measures, shall by him be no less re-
 “ ligiously respected.

“ In making, or rather in renewing this decla-
 “ ration, the King of the French enjoys the
 “ double satisfaction of expressing the wish of a
 “ people, in whose eyes every war, which is not
 “ rendered necessary by a due attention to its de-
 “ fence, is essentially unjust, and of joining par-
 “ ticularly in the wishes of his Majesty, for the
 “ tranquillity of Europe, which would never be
 “ disturbed, if France and England would unite,
 “ in order to preserve it.”

Such then, Sir, is the situation in which his
 Majesty stands with respect to France.

During the transactions of the last Summer,
 when France was engaged in a war against the
 powers of Austria and Prussia, his Majesty de-
 parted in no shape from that neutrality. His Ma-
 jesty did no one act from which it could be justly
 inferred, that he was friendly to that system. But

what, let me ask the House, has been the conduct of France as to those express reiterated assurances, applied to the public concerns which I have now detailed?

These assurances went to three points; to a determination to abstain from views of aggrandizement; not to interfere with the government of neutral nations, which they admitted to be a violation of the law of nations; and to observe the rights of his Majesty and his allies.

What has been the conduct of France on these three points, under the new system? She has, both by her words and actions, manifested a determination, if not checked by force, to act on principles of aggrandizement. She has compleatly disclaimed that maxim, "that whatever was the fate of their arms in war, France rejected all ideas of aggrandizement." She has made use of the first moment of success to publish a contradiction to that declaration. She has made use of the first instance of success in Savoy, without even attempting the ceremony of disguise (after having professed

fed a determination to confine herself within her ancient limits) to annex it for ever as an Eighty-fourth Department to the present sovereignty of France. They have by their decree announced a determination to carry on a similar operation in every country into which their arms can be carried, with a view, in substance, if not in name, to do the same thing in every country where they can with success.

Their decree of the 13th of December contains a fair illustration and confirmation of their principles and designs. They have by that decree expressly stated the plan on which they mean to act. Whenever they obtain a temporary success, whatever be the situation of the country into which they come, whatever may have been its antecedent conduct, whatever may be its political connections, they have determined not to abandon the possession of it, till they have effected the utter and absolute subversion of its form of government, of every ancient, every established usage, however long they may have existed, and however much they may have been revered. They will not accept,

cept, under the name of liberty, any model of government, but that which is conformable to their own opinions and ideas ; and all men must learn from the mouth of their cannon the propagation of their system in every part of the world. They have regularly and boldly avowed these instructions, which they sent to the Commissioners who were to carry these orders into execution. They have stated to them what this House could not believe, they have stated to them a revolutionary principle and order, for the purpose of being applied in every country in which the French arms are crowned with success. They have stated, that they would organize every country by a disorganizing principle ; and afterwards they tell you all this is done by the will of the people. Wherever our arms come, revolutions must take place, dictated by the will of the people. And then comes this plain question, what is this will of the people ? It is the power of the French. They have explained what that liberty is which they wish to give to every nation ; and if they will not accept of it voluntarily, they compel them. They take every opportunity to destroy every institution that is
most

most sacred and most valuable in every nation where their armies have made their appearance ; and under the name of Liberty, they have resolved to make every country in substance, if not in form, a province dependent on themselves, through the despotism of Jacobin societies. This has given a more fatal blow to the liberties of mankind, than any they have suffered, even from the boldest attempts of the most aspiring monarch. We see, therefore, that France has trampled under foot all laws, human and divine. She has at last avowed the most insatiable ambition, and greatest contempt for the law of nations, which all independent states have hitherto professed most religiously to observe ; and unless she is stopped in her career, all Europe must soon learn their ideas of justice—law of nations—models of government—and principles of liberty from the mouth of the French cannon.

I gave the first instance of their success in Savoy, as a proof of their ambition and aggrandizement. I wish the House to attend to the practical effect of their system, in the situation of the Netherlands. You will find in some of the correspondence

dence between France and this country, this declaration on the part of France.

“ She has renounced, and again renounces every
 “ conquest, and her occupation of the Low
 “ Countries, shall only continue during the war,
 “ and the time which may be necessary to the
 “ Belgians to ensure and consolidate their Liberty,
 “ after which, they will be independent and hap-
 “ py. France will find her recompence in her fe-
 “ licity.”

I ask whether this can mean any thing else, than that they hope to add the Netherlands, as an 84th or 85th department, to the French Republic ; whether it does not mean a subjugation of the Netherlands, to the absolute power of France, to a total and unequalled dependence on her ? If any man entertains doubts upon the subject, let him look at the allegations of Dumourier, enforced by martial law. What was the conduct of this General, when he arrived at Brussels ? Did he not assemble the inhabitants in the most public part of their city to elect the Primary Assemblies ? How agreeable

agreeable must have been his arrival in the Netherlands, by his employing threats to procure a general illumination on his entrance into Brussels ! A hollow square of the French troops was drawn round the Tree of Liberty, to prevent the natives from pulling down the emblem of French Freedom. This shews how well disposed the people were to receive the French system of Liberty ! This is the manner in which their principles are carried into effect in the different countries of Europe. I may here mention the conduct of the Convention, on the occasion of an address from the people of Mons, in which they desire, that the Province of Hainault might be added as an 85th Department of France. The Convention referred the address to a committee, to report the form in which countries, wishing to unite with France, were to be admitted into the union. The Convention could not decide upon it, and therefore they sent it to a committee to point out the manner in which they were to make their application for that purpose, so that the receiving them was to be a fixed and standing principle, which in its consequences, if not timely prevented, must destroy the

E

liberties

liberties and independence of England, as well as of all Europe

I would next proceed to their confirmed pledge, not to interfere in the government of other neutral countries. What they have done here is in countries, which, under some pretence or other, they have made their enemies.

I need not remind the House of the decree of the 19th of November, which is a direct attack on every government in Europe, by encouraging the seditious of all nations to rise up against their lawful rulers, and by promising them their support and assistance. By this decree, they hold out an encouragement to insurrection and rebellion in every country in the world. They shew you they mean no exception, by ordering this decree to be printed in all languages. And therefore I might ask any man of common sense, whether any nation upon earth could be out of their contemplation at the time they passed it? And whether it was not meant to extend to England, whatever might be their pretences to the contrary? It is most manifest,
they

they mean to carry their principles into every nation, without exception, subvert and destroy every government, and to plant on their ruins their sacred Tree of Liberty.

Some observations, to which they have affected to give the name of explanations, have been applied to this decree, and are these, " Now, to come to the three points which can alone make an object of difficulty at the court of London, the executive council observe respecting the first, which is the decree of the 19th of November, that we have not been properly understood by the ministry of his Britannic Majesty, when they accuse us of having given an explanation *which announces to the seditious of all nations, what are the cases in which they may previously count on the support and assistance of France.* Nothing could be more foreign than this reproach to the sentiments of the National Convention, and to the explanation we have given of them; and we did not think it was possible we should be charged with the open design of favouring the *seditious*, at the very moment when we declare that it would be *wronging the National Convention, if they were charged with the project of pro-*

teeling insurrections, and with the commotions that may break out in any corner of a state, of joining the ring-leaders, and of thus making the cause of a few private individuals that of the French nation.

“ We have said, and we desire to repeat it that the decree of the 19th of November, could not have any application, unless to the single case in which the GENERAL WILL of a nation clearly and unequivocally expressed, should call the French nation to its assistance and fraternity. Sedition can certainly never be construed into the GENERAL WILL. These two ideas mutually repel each other, since a sedition is not, and cannot be any other than the movement of a small number against the nation at large. And this movement would cease to be seditious, provided all the members of a society should at once rise, either to reform its government, or to change its form *in toto*, or for any other object.

“ The Dutch were assuredly not seditious, when they formed the generous resolution of shaking off the yoke of Spain; and when the general will of that nation called for the assistance of France, it

was

was not reputed a crime in Henry IV. or in Elizabeth of England to have listened to them. The knowledge of the *general will* is the only basis of the transactions of nations with each other. And we can only treat with any government whatever on this principle, that such a government is deemed *the organ of the general will of the nation governed.*

“ Thus when by this natural interpretation, the decree of the 19th of November is reduced to what it truly implies, it will be found, that it announces nothing more than an act of the general will, and that beyond any doubt, so effectually founded in right, that it was scarcely worth the trouble to express it. On this account, the executive council thinks that the evidence of this right, might, perhaps, have been dispensed with by the National Convention, and did not deserve to be made the object of a particular decree; but with the interpretation that precedes it, it cannot give uneasiness to any nation whatever.”

To all this I shall only observe, that in the whole context of their language, on every occasion, they shew the clearest intention to propagate
their

their principles all over the world. Their explanations contain only an avowal and repetition of the offence. They have proscribed royalty as a crime, and will not be satisfied but with its total destruction. The dreadful sentence which they have executed on their own unfortunate Monarch, applies to every Sovereign now existing. And lest you should not be satisfied that they mean to extend their system to this country, the conduct of the National Convention has applied itself, by repeated acts, to yourselves by name, which makes any explanation on their part unsatisfactory and unavailing. There is no society in England, however contemptible in their numbers, however desperate in their principles, and questionable in their existence, who possessed treason and disloyalty, who were not cherished, justified and applauded, and treated even with a degree of theatrical extravagance at the bar of the National Convention. You have also a list of the answers given to them at that bar. And, after all this, am I to ask you, whether England is one of the countries into which they wish to introduce a spirit of proselytism? which, exercised in
the

the dominions of friendly powers, they themselves admit, would be a violation of the law of nations.

On the third point it is unnecessary for me to expatiate, I mean on the violation of the rights of his Majesty, or of his allies.

To insist upon the opening of the river Scheldt, is an act of itself, in which the French nation had no right to interfere at all, unless she was the sovereign of the Low Countries, or boldly professed herself the general arbitress of Europe. This singular circumstance was an aggravation of their case, because they were bound by the faith of solemn and recent treaties, to secure to the Dutch the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, and to have opposed the opening of that river, if any other power had attempted it. If France were the sovereign of the Low Countries, she would only succeed to the rights which were enjoyed by the House of Austria. And if she possessed the sovereignty, with all its advantages, she must also take it with all its incumbrances, of which the shutting up the Scheldt was one.

France

France can have no right to annul the stipulations relative to the Scheldt, unless she has also the right to set aside, equally, all the other treaties between all the powers of Europe, and all the other rights of England, or of her allies. England will never consent that France shall arrogate the power of annulling, at her pleasure, and under the pretence of a natural right, of which she makes herself the only judge, the political system of Europe, established by solemn treaties, and guaranteed by the consent of all the powers. Such a violation of rights as France has been guilty of, it would be difficult to find in the history of the world. The conduct of that nation is in the highest degree arbitrary, capricious, and founded upon no one principle of reason or justice. They declare this treaty was antiquated, and extorted by despotism, or procured by corruption. But what happened recently in the last year? This new and enlightened nation renewed her assurances of respecting all the rights of all his Majesty's allies, without any exception, without any reservation, so that the advancement of this claim is directly contrary to their recent professions. From the treaty of Munster,

Munster, down to the year 1785, the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt has been one of the established rights of Holland. We are told it is to be said, no formal requisition has been made by Holland for the support of this country. I beg Gentlemen to consider, whether ships going up the Scheldt, after a protest of the States General, was not such an act as to have justified them in calling upon this country for a contingent of men. If this House means substantial good faith to its engagements, if it retains a just sense of the solemn faith of treaties, it must shew a determination to support them. Without entering too far upon this subject, let me call to their attention, for a moment, one circumstance, I mean the sudden effect and progress of French ambition, and of French arms. If, from that circumstance, Holland had just reason to be afraid to make a formal requisition, if she had seen just reason not to do what she might have been well justified in doing, that was no reason why we should not observe our treaty. Are we to stand by as indifferent spectators, and look at France trampling upon the ancient treaties of the allies of this country? Are

we to view with indifference the progress of French ambition, and of French arms, by which our allies are exposed to the greatest danger? This is surely no reason for England to be inactive and slothful. If Holland has not immediately called upon us for our support and assistance, she may have been influenced by motives of policy, and her forbearance ought not to be supposed to arise from her indifference about the river Scheldt. If Holland had not applied to England when Antwerp was taken, the French might have over-run her territory. And unless we wish to stand by, and to suffer state after state to be subverted under the power of France, we must now declare our firm resolution effectually to oppose those principles of ambition and aggrandizement, which have for their object the destruction of England, of Europe, and of the world.

The next thing is, whether we see any thing in these papers which furnishes an answer to the past, or gives any security for the future?

What

What does the explanation amount to on the subject of the treaty of our allies? It refers to the possibility of negotiation at an indefinite period. She says, "the (France) has renounced, and again renounces every conquest, and her occupation of the Low Countries shall only continue during the war, and the time which may be necessary to the Belgians to ensure and consolidate their liberty, after which they will be independent and happy, and France will find her recompence in their felicity."

What is this but an avowal of their former declarations?

On the subject of interference with neutral nations, there is one or two explanations of the decree of the 19th of November, which has been so often discussed. We are, indeed, told it is injurious to suppose the National Convention could have intended to apply this decree to any country but where, by the public will, they have been called to give assistance and fraternity.

This is in fact to advertise for TREASON and REBELLION.

Is there any man who could give credit to the reception which the English societies received in France ? Though their numbers are too contemptible for the animadversion of the law, or the notice of our own executive government, they were considerable enough for the National Convention. They tell you they are the clear, undisputed, constituted organ of the will of the people at large. What reliance can be placed on all their explanations, after the avowal of principles to the last degree dangerous to the liberty, the constitution, the independence, and the very existence of this country.

My time and my strength would fail me, if I were to attempt to go through all those various circumstances which are connected with this subject.

I shall take the liberty of reading a passage from a publication which came into my hands this morning

ing, and I am extremely glad to have seen collected together, so many instances in which the conduct of France is detected.

In a note from M. Chauvelin, dated December 27, 1792, he complains of the harsh construction which the British Ministry had put on the conduct of France, and professes the strongest friendship for Great Britain. And yet, on the 31st of December, 1792, that is, in four days after, one of the members of the Executive Council, who had given these assurances to England, wrote this letter to the friends of liberty and equality in all the sea-ports in France.

“ The Government of England is arming, and
 “ the King of Spain, encouraged by this, is pre-
 “ daring to attack us. These two tyrannical
 “ Powers, after persecuting the patriots in their
 “ own territories, think, no doubt, that they
 “ shall be able to influence the judgment to be
 “ pronounced on the tyrant Louis. They hope
 “ to frighten us. But no! A people who has
 “ made itself free; a people who has driven out
 “ of

“ of the bosom of France, and as far as the distant borders of the Rhine, the terrible army of the Prussians and Austrians, the people of France will not suffer laws to be dictated to them by a tyrant.

“ The King and his Parliament mean to make war against us! Will the English republicans suffer it? Already these free men shew their discontent, and the repugnance which they have to bear arms against their brothers, the French. Well! we will fly to their succour; we will make a descent on the island; we will lodge there fifty thousand caps of liberty; we will plant there the sacred tree, and we will stretch out our arms to our republican brethren. *The tyranny of their Government will soon be destroyed.* Let every one of us be strongly impressed with this idea. MONGE.”

Such is the declaration of the sentiments of the Minister of the Marine; a declaration which separates not only the King, but the King and Parliament of Great Britain from the people, who are called

called republicans. What faith can be put in assurances given on the part of France by M. Chauvelin, on the 27th of December, when in four days after we find the Minister of the Marine writing such a letter.

It was to be hoped we might have seen reasons perhaps, in consequence of friendly explanations, for not going to war. But such explanations as this communication contains have been justly rejected.

I shall not detain the House longer on this subject.

I shall state now what appears to be the state of the negotiation. I take the conduct of France to be inconsistent with the peace and liberty of Europe. They have not given us satisfaction with respect to the question in issue. It is true, what they call explanations have taken place. But their principles, and the whole manner of their conduct, are such, that no faith can be put in their declarations. Their conduct gives the lie to their public professions ;

professions ; and instead of giving satisfaction on the distinct articles, on which you have a right to claim a clear and precise explanation, and shewing any desire to abandon those views of conquest and aggrandizement, to return within their ancient limits, and to set barriers to the progress of their destructive arms, and to their principles, still more destructive ; instead of doing so, they have given, explanations I cannot call them, but an avowal of those very things you complain of. And in the last paper from M. Chauvelin, which may therefore be considered as the *ultimatum*, are these words :

“ After so frank a declaration, which manifests
 “ such a sincere desire of peace, his Britannic Ma-
 “ jesty’s Ministers ought not to have any doubts
 “ with regard to the intentions of France. If her
 “ explanations appear insufficient, and if we are
 “ still obliged to hear a haughty language ; if hos-
 “ tile preparations are continued in the English
 “ ports, after having exhausted every means to
 “ preserve peace, we will prepare for war with
 “ the sense of the justice of our cause, and of our
 “ efforts

“ efforts to avoid this extremity. We will fight
 “ the English, whom we esteem, with regret, but
 “ we will fight them without fear.”

This is an ultimatum to which you cannot accede. They have neither withdrawn their armies from the neighbouring nations, nor shewn the least disposition to withdraw them. If France is really desirous of maintaining friendship and peace with England, she must shew herself disposed to renounce her views of aggression and aggrandizement, and to confine herself within her own territory, without insulting other Governments, without disturbing their tranquility, without violating their rights. And unless she consent to these terms, whatever may be our wishes for peace, the final issue must be war. As to the time, as to the moment when war is to commence, *if there is yet any possibility of satisfactory explanation, and security for the future, it is not to the last moment precluded. But I should disguise my sentiments to the House, if I stated, that I thought it in any degree probable.*

This country has always been desirous of peace. We desire it still, but such as may be real and solid, and consistent with the interests and dignity of Britain, and with the general security of Europe.

War, whenever it comes, will be preferable to peace without honour, without security, and which is incompatible either with the external safety, or the internal happiness of this country.

I have endeavoured to comprehend as much as possible, though I am sensible I have left a great deal untouched. If any topic should afterwards arise, I trust I shall meet with the indulgence of the House in stating it.

I shall now move, “ That an humble Address
 “ be presented to his Majesty, to return his Ma-
 “ jesty the thanks of this House for his most gra-
 “ cious message, and the communication of the
 “ papers, which, by his Majesty’s command have
 “ been laid before us.

“ To

“ To offer his Majesty our heartfelt condo-
 “ lence on the atrocious act lately perpetrated at
 “ Paris, which must be viewed by every nation in
 “ Europe as an outrage on religion, justice, and hu-
 “ manity ; and as a striking and dreadful example
 “ of the effects of principles which lead to the
 “ violation of the most sacred duties, and are ut-
 “ terly subversive of the peace, and order of all
 “ civil society.

“ To represent to his majesty, that it is impos-
 “ sible for us not to be sensible of the views of
 “ aggrandizement and ambition, which in viola-
 “ tion of repeated and solemn professions have
 “ been openly manifested on the part of France,
 “ and which are connected with the propagation
 “ of principles incompatible with the existence of
 “ all just and regular government ; that under the
 “ present circumstances, we consider a vigorous
 “ and effectual opposition to those views, as essen-
 “ tial to the security of every thing that is most
 “ dear and valuable to us as a nation, and to
 “ the future tranquillity and safety of all other
 “ countries,

“ That

"That impressed with these sentiments, we
 "shall, with the utmost zeal and alacrity, afford
 "his Majesty the most effectual assistance, to
 "enable his Majesty to make a further augmenta-
 "tion of his forces by sea and land, and to act as
 "circumstances may require in the present impor-
 "tant conjuncture, for maintaining the security
 "and honour of his crown; for supporting the
 "just rights of his allies, and for preserving to
 "his people the undisturbed enjoyment of the
 "blessings, which under the Divine Providence
 "they receive from the British Constitution!"

F I N I S.

